

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14571, of the Meyer Foundation, as amended, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 (3108.1, DCMR 11) of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.42 (206.1, DCMR 11) for a private school for adults, 35 persons (faculty and staff), 20 student visitors daily, on behalf of the Meridian House International in a D/R-5-B District at premises 1624 Crescent Place, N.W., (Square 2568, Lot 806).

HEARING DATE: March 18, 1987

DECISION DATE: March 18, 1987 (Bench Decision)

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The application was amended to change the Paragraph from which the relief is sought from Paragraph 3101.46 to Paragraph 3101.42.

2 The site, known as premises 1624 Crescent Place, N.W. is located between Crescent Place and Belmont Street. The site is located to the west of 16th Street in a D/R-5-B District.

3. The site comprises 34,132 square feet. It is improved with the "White/Meyer Mansion", a structure with historic landmark status.

4. Abutting the site to the west is Meridian House International and to the east is an undeveloped lot that constitutes part of the grounds for the subject site. To the north of the site across Crescent Place is a cooperative apartment building and a rental apartment building and to the south across Belmont Place are townhouses that are part of the Beekman Place Condominiums. The D/R-5-B District extends to the north and west of the site. An R-5-C District is located to the northeast and south of the site.

5. The site is currently vacant. From 1972 until recently, the Antioch School of Law leased the Meyer Mansion from the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation to house its law library, cafeteria, certain administrative offices, and meeting rooms pursuant to BZA Order No. 11080, in which the BZA approved the Antioch Campus Plan.

6. The subject site is currently under contract for sale to Meridian House International, which owns the

abutting property to the west. Meridian House International (MHI) was established in 1960 as a nonprofit educational institution specializing in world affairs. MHI conducts various international educational and cultural exchange programs for adults including world affairs seminars, lectures, art exhibitions, concerts, and other cultural events, as well as orientation courses and study and observation programs designed for foreign leaders. The goal of MHI's activities is to bring together foreign leader-grantees of the U.S. Government, foreign diplomats and American citizens in a mutually beneficial learning experience. MHI's programs help international visitors understand the history, culture, and values of the United States, and help Americans understand the traditions, history, and aspirations of other world societies.

7. MHI's central facility is located immediately to the west of the subject property at 1630 Crescent Place, N.W. and operates under a Certificate of Occupancy for a private school for adults. Currently, MHI also leases space at locations throughout the City in order to gain additional classroom, counselling, and seminar space.

8. Pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 (3108.1, DCMR 11) of the Zoning Regulations. The applicant is seeking a special exception under Paragraph 3101.42 (206.1, DCMR 11) to establish a private school for adults, 35 persons (faculty and staff) 20 students/visitors daily on behalf of the Meridian House International.

9. MHI is seeking to purchase the site to enable it to consolidate its operations on adjacent properties and to offer a more cohesive atmosphere for adult educational programs and counseling. The site will be used as a classroom building for primarily small classes, counseling, occasional seminars, and related cultural events.

10. An average of 18 to 20 student-visitors will attend classes and programs on the site on a daily basis. In addition, a total of approximately 35 faculty and staff members, including building maintenance personnel, will be on the site each day. The hours of operation of the proposed use will be generally from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday. The school will generally be closed on evenings and weekends except that the building may be open occasionally in the evenings and on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. when an exhibit is on display.

11. This application does not involve any exterior alterations to the Meyer Mansion. The only work planned for the exterior is to restore and maintain the grounds. The application does involve some minor interior renovations. The renovations will be designed to update the infrastructure

systems and to convert the existing library space into classroom, seminar, and limited faculty and administrative office space.

12. The property slopes upward significantly from the front of the site on Crescent Place to the rear of the site on Belmont Street. The Meyer Mansion sits on a hill toward the rear of the site and is thus on a different topographic level from both the cooperative apartment building that is located across Crescent Place to the north and the townhouse condominium that is located across Belmont Street to the south.

13. The number of persons who will visit the site on a daily basis will be less under the proposed use than the number that visited the site under the prior use. The Antioch School of Law student body had, over the years, from 150 to 450 students, and the law school library was designed to accommodate 125 students.

14. Of the approximately 55 people who will be on the site on any given day, it is anticipated that a significance majority of them will arrive at the site by public transportation, in a car pool, or on foot. The student-visitors who will visit the site are all transients and will not have automobiles.

15. The applicant presented expert testimony from a land planner and a report from a traffic consultant indicating that the proposed use would not generate objectionable levels of traffic. The report of the traffic consultant states that the modal split for the area indicates that 70 percent of the people arriving at the site will arrive by public transportation or carpool. The report further shows that traffic in the area currently operates at an A level of service and that the proposed use will not change this level of service. The Board concurs with the expert testimony.

16. Meridian House International has coexisted in the neighborhood on the site next door to the subject site since 1960.

17. The number of parking spaces provided to serve the proposed use are in excess of the number required by the Zoning Regulations.

18. The Meyer Mansion is listed in the District of Columbia's inventory of historic sites and therefore no parking spaces are required under Article 72 of the Zoning Regulations. Meridian House International owns a parking lot that is located approximately 200 feet to the west of the subject site, on the west side of 17th Street, opposite Crescent Place, with spaces for 38 vehicles. The lot is presently used by visiting lecturers and employees of MHI's

existing facility next door to the subject site. Currently, the lot is underutilized and there are usually more than 16 empty spaces at all times. The parking lot will be available to visiting lecturers and employees if MHI's proposed school in the Meyer Mansion.

19. Nine bus routes pass within four blocks of the site and the site is within walking distance to the Dupont Circle Metro Station.

20. The Department of Public Works (DPW) by memorandum dated March 11, 1987, found that the proposed use would not pose any adverse problems to the area street system. DPW noted that because the proposed use is substantially less intense than the prior use, with fewer students, faculty and staff, it is expected that traffic in the area would be reduced below what formerly existed. The Board concurs with the DPW report.

21. The Office of Planning, by memorandum dated March 11, 1987, recommended approval of the application. OP noted that the proposed use of the subject site will meet the special exception criteria for private schools in the D/R-5-B District. The staff size, student population, and operational characteristics will have minimal affects on the surrounding properties. The proposed use will be a less intense use than the prior use from a traffic and parking impact viewpoint. The Board concurs with the findings and recommendation of the Office of Planning.

22. Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 1C voted unanimously at its March 4, 1987, public meeting to strongly support this application as having no potential adverse impact on the neighborhood. The Board, for good cause shown, accepted a written statement from the ANC at the public hearing on March 18, 1987.

23. There were several letters submitted in support of the application.

24. There was no opposition to this application, either of record or at the public hearing.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the findings of fact and the evidence of record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception to allow the use of an existing building as a private school. The granting of such special exception requires that the proposed use meet the requirements of Paragraph 3101.42 and Paragraph 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations. Paragraph 3101.42 allows that the Board may approve the establishment of a private school, provided that:

3101.421 It is so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions;

3101.422 Ample parking space, but not less than that required in Article 72 of these regulations, teachers, and provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile.


The Board concludes that the applicant has met its burden of proof. The school will be so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions. The Board further concludes that ample parking space will be provided for students, teachers and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile. The parking provided will exceed that required in Article 72.

The Board further concludes that the relief requested can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. The Board concludes that it has accorded "great weight" to the issues and concerns of Advisory Neighborhood Commission - 1C. Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED that the application is GRANTED.

VOTE: 4-0 (Patricia N. Mathews, William F. McIntosh, Charles R. Norris and Carrie L. Thornhill to grant; Paula L. Jewell not voting, having recused herself).

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:

  
EDWARD L. CURRY  
Acting Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: APR 10 1987

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS, "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

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